Approved by HEC "Y" Catagory

Quarterly Al-Aijaz
Research Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities

Vol: 5   Issue: 2
Apr: to Jun: 2021

ISSN (Online): 2707-1219
ISSN (Print): 2707-1200

Al-Khadim Foundation Matiari (Reg.)

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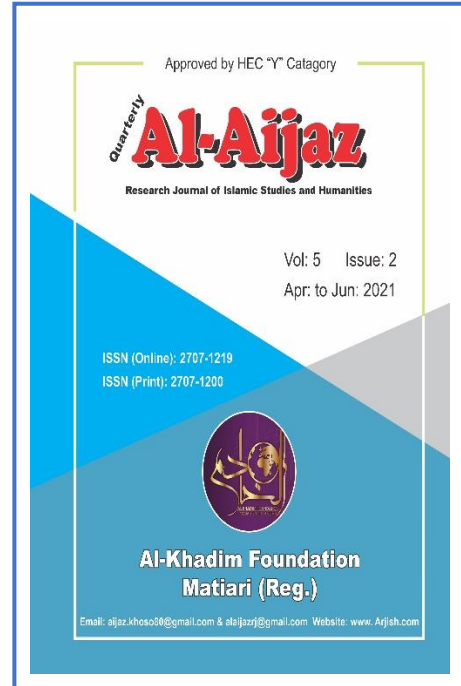
TOPIC:

Learning religious education through Practice: Impact of co-curricular Activities in teaching of Religious Studies at university level.
A survey of a group of Pakistani students.

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QR Code

Learning religious education through Practice: Impact of co-curricular Activities in teaching of Religious Studies at university level.
A survey of a group of Pakistani students.

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Abstract

Learning is an interesting activity but learning religious teachings varies from person to person. Sometimes religious education is taken with emotional zeal and sometimes with the constructive approach or faith. In a society like Pakistan where religious education is a compulsory part of syllabus religious teachings should be taken for the purpose of constructive approach. But unfortunately religious education as compulsory subject has taken by the students only to fulfill the requirement of curriculum. Even the religious teachers teach religious subject as requirement of curriculum instead of enabling students to grasp the true and practical meaning of Islam. The main problem in teaching and learning Islamic studies as subject is effective teaching methodologies which could create interest and understanding of Islamic values and way of life. The traditional methods in Islamic education can help students in gathering large amount of information about Islam but it does not enable them to properly remember and to use this information practically because the rational and analytical approach of teaching is missing in class room (Khan,2009). Present research is conducted to evaluate the impact of co-curricular activities in teaching of Islamic studies at under graduate level and effectiveness of adopting these techniques in creating interest of students in learning and applying Islamic teachings and values in practical life.
Keywords: Learning, Religious education, co-curricular activities, Impact, Islam.

Introduction
The idea of learning and practicing religion is gradually becoming personal and varies from person to person mater. Instant mind of the modern world's individual search for the moral, spiritual and religious truth within social, political and emotional context (Matthew W. G.2015). Some people take religious education with a constructive approach, some take it as passion and inspiration, for some people religion is a matter of faith.
Some learn religious teachings or information for moral, spiritual or social reasons and practice accordingly (Taylor2007). For some people , religion is a practical code of conduct involving the whole life, even something worth knowing on which the modern education should based (pace1915), but the question is teaching method of religion which should be effective like other methods of education , rather , religious education can be taught through more inspirational methods of learning (pace1915).The current situation in religious education is considered as period of crises as post-modern model of education versus existing model of religious education. The need is neither the liberal nor modern model of education rather the combination of the two that is capable of meeting the challenges of diversity in education and society (Kuhn, T.S.1996).
Religious courses are believed to be just moral and intellectual engagement (Dean

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2010).While the religious education is required to teach in such a way that it inculcates into the hearts and minds of the people ((Nord 2010).Religion and diversity and various models of religious education have been under discussion since 1960s in Europe, in reaction to traditional forms of subjects (Philip Barnes, 2014).Sometimes religious studies and religious education has taken separately with the view that religious education has different set of aims from religious studies (Philip.B.2014).No matter if it is religious education or religious studies need is to develop understanding of religion in minds of the people especially students of schools ,colleges and universities. Even the religious education should be a part of government policy making.

In many countries, government policies explicitly address religious education (Davis and Miroshnikova,

2013).Even in a country like Greece the religious education is an integral part of education (Marios K.

L,2015). In European countries need of religious education or religious studies has been realized to reestablishes religious education in universities, colleges and schools and teachers education in spirit of multi faiths

(Philip.B.2014). Courses were required in core curriculum for different grades, faculty designed reflective and contemplative exercises that would allow students to explore the spiritual resources of the world's great religious traditions and their relevance for practical life (White 2005).

Pakistan and Religious Education:
 Pakistan as an Islamic Ideological state declared in its constitution that all students up to undergraduate level have to have been taught the Islamic studies as compulsory subject on a mandatory basis. The aim of teaching Islamic studies up to undergrad level is ensuring the religious basis of the students .Focus of teaching Islamic studies to the students should be reflective education altogether in their mind as well practices especially as human beings and firm Muslims .In this regard the teachers must give practical and reflective education and learning to the students. But unfortunately the reality is different from the aim of learning Islamic studies or Islamic education. Because the religious education as compulsory subject has taken by the students only to fulfill the compulsory requirement except for a few learners who opt for the said subjects to get guidance in applying religious education as standard code of life, hence, restraining the students from grasping the true and practical meaning of Islam.

Religious Education in Islam:
Islam is the only religion which encourages learning, teaching and education from the very first day of first revelation as the first revelation revealed to prophet Muhammad (SAW) started with instruction of reading (AlQuran,Alaq:1-5). The whole narration describes that, Angel Gabriel was assigned the task to teach and help Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in memorizing the verses of Quran in such a way that would enable Him to deliver the verses to all and followers effectively. Practical learning is encouraged in Islam even Prophet of Islam (SAW) has delivered revelation of Allah not only by recitation and the verses but by giving the practical implication of these verses through following the instructions of

revelation .Every time when the revelation came to the Prophet (SAW), it was not only given to the followers through words but also with practical implication of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as well. It can be said rightly that the message of Islam was given to the learner of Islam with the practical demonstration of the teacher of Islam. Therefore the initial followers of Islam laid down the foundations of Islamic beliefs, rituals and social implication with an effective methodology and implications.

Teaching and effective method of Learning:

The method of teaching and learning is considered as important pillar in educational process (Arifin, 2004) especially in modeling the character of students and learning environment in order to transfer knowledge, interest, attitude, beliefs and values. Religious education could certainly learn from perspective of pedagogy and awareness and should contribute towards student's spiritual, moral and social training (Feldor.M.2015). Religious experts and teachers adopt different methods and tactics to enhance the religious knowledge in minds of the students. Sometimes imaginative reflection is created through expression and communication, and sometimes relational reflection is created through spiritual accompaniment (Matthew W. G.2015). In case of

Islamic education , the goals could not be achieved successfully without effective teaching strategies

(Yunas.K&Ab.Halim.T,2010).There are many reasons why Muslim students should study religion especially in Islamic Ideological society like Pakistan where teaching and learning religious education up to under graduate level is part of constitution. The benefits of Religious education for Muslim students in the class room develop self-confidence and the ability to become productive members of society (Peek.L,2005).Teaching Islamic studies to the Muslims will promote a strong Islamic community, which will help in public service such as establishing community hospitals, parks, homeless feeding events(Syed,2001).The same point has been supported by Barnes in 2014 that religious education should contribute to the ideas of morality which can contribute in pupils' moral development and to communities' social development.

The teaching of Islamic studies requires comprehensive and innovative methodologies because the latest growth and progress in every field of life cannot be separated from the course of Islamic studies rather it should be reinforced by Islamic concept of learning and education. This will help students not only in learning Islamic education but will prepare them to make their lives, actions, decisions, and approaches according to the spiritual and ethical values of Islam (Pryor &.Rasekh,2004). Religious education and its ineffective method

of teaching currently misrepresents the nature of religion because it lacks to develop respect for mankind (Barne,2014).It is important to maximize the proper use of effective teaching methodologies that can help to present the clear vision of Islam and facilitate students in understanding the value of Islam. Students learning vary from wide spectrum from those who have difficulty in learning and those who are not interested in learning the subject of Islamic studies but they have to study as it is requirement of the degree and only be taught in one semester containing three credits in their whole four years program. This can be accomplished through implementing factors such as positive attitude towards learning, creativity, and mere fun. Co-curricular activities would help students to have fun

and absorb information that they normally wouldn't through conventional teaching styles such as lectures. In other words, students who learn through co-curricular activities have better chance of remembering the material and would also feel sense of accomplishment after the activity has been done. A Chinese proverb states:

"I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand".

Therefore for if a teacher is highly qualified but does not know how to convey knowledge ,may be deficient as the teacher (Ismail,1997).In a survey about Islamic curriculum by Al-Meajal, it was found that the teaching methods of Islamic education are so poor and ineffective that students learning and interest does not increase rather the students feel that their teachers have not made the best use of their opportunities (Al-Sadan,1999).Ultimately the teachers become the central speaker in religious education courses with lecture system and students start playing passive role as listener in class rooms. Hassan Langgulung (1988) emphasized that impact of teaching methodologies in any curriculum will result in learning of students. Learning of any subject cannot be done effectively if it is not delivered in particular way to avoid wastage of effort and time (Abdullah,1982). Therefore, teachers must be skilled in presenting, explaining, and demonstrating ideas (Arends,2010). The goal should be to have each student become a part of the learning experience. Even the holy prophet Muhammad himself adopted diverse method of teaching when engaging with the Muslims, which includes, interactive conversation, practical demonstration, assigning tasks to the Companions with the intentions of team work, illustration, asking question , and through telling stories of the past.

Statement of Problem:

The main problem in teaching and learning Islamic studies as subject is ineffective teaching methodologies which if changed could create interest and understanding of Islamic values and way of life. The traditional methods in Islamic education can help students in gathering large amount of information about Islam but it does not enable them to properly remember and using the information because the rational and analytical approach of teaching is missing in class room (Khan,2009). According to Hussain (2005) among the factors which disconnect students and teachers in Islamic education in weakened Islamic schools, the major is poor teaching methodologies. The common methodology used in Islamic education is direct instructions or lecture system (Ab.Halimet,2004).

The question here is whether this methodology is effective for students learning of Islamic values and application of Islamic teachings in daily life or not. While the facts through the study of Life history of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) shows that 40 different methods were used by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in education of Muslims (Sahih Muslim).

Living and learning in advance instructional technology and facilities, now Islamic information is on one click on the internet. Lecture based teaching for Islamic Studies lacks creativity and learning of Islamic education. Students usually take subject of Islamic studies as requirement of their degree program. Their lack of participation in the learning process would leave a very minimal impact on minds and heart which are not enough to achieve the desired outcomes of Islamic studies course offered at under graduate level. The above statements of the problem guided to conduct the present research by evaluating the impact of co-curricular activities in teaching of Islamic studies at under graduate level of students

and effectiveness of adopting these techniques in creating interest of students in learning and applying Islamic teachings and values in practical life.

Objectives of Research:
The main objective of this research is to investigate the teaching and learning process through co-curricular activities. The other objectives are:
1.   To investigate the learning of students through practical experiments in class room and outdoor activities.
2.   To identify which methodologies are mostly preferred by students in taking interest in learning.
3.   To find out the level of effectiveness of teaching Islamic studies with innovative methods that enhances students participation in subject and eventually contributing to their personality development.

Methodology:
The design of research is quantitative which has been conducted through experimental survey questionnaire approach. The word survey defines method of gathering information from sample of groups, individuals, organizations in the population that is to be studied (Biemer, 2003). Survey research is considered as gathering information through questionnaire or interviews(Hutchinsons,2004).Other than quantitative analysis, Experimental research has been added in this because the sample population has been investigated through applying cu-curricular activities as teaching methods with different groups of students from under graduate level.

Population and Sample:
The population of this study is the students of Comsats Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad
(Recognized university of Pakistan in Information technology and sciences), Fall 2014, and Spring 2015sessions.Quota sampling technique was used to select a total number of 150 students as sample population for this study. These students were taught through methods of adopting different co-curricular activities .At the end semester survey was conducted to investigate their level of learning before and after completion of Islamic studies subject with new methods of teaching.

Table 1
Number of Sample

No	Class/Group	Total Number of Students
1	Bio-Sciences	15
2	Mathematics	10
3	Computer Sciences	10

4	Electrical Engineering	10
5	Management Sciences	10
6	Software engineering	10
7	Psychology	10
	Total	75

Instrument:
The questionnaire used in study is combination of self developed and adopted questionnaires. The instruments of study consist of five main sections. First part contains demographical information with 4 item questions.

Second, types of teaching strategies with 20 item questions of lowest and highest level of improvement; third, 10 item questions of some other techniques of learning through activities with reply of Yes or No; fourth, preferred teaching strategies with 10 item questions; fifth, types of questions with 4 item questions about most practical and helpful techniques in all mentioned strategies in academic learning.

Table 2
Description of Questionnaire

	Sections	No. of Items
A	Demographical information	4
B	Types of co curricular techniques	25
C	Learning through activities	10
D	Preferred techniques in students interest	11
E	Preferred techniques in academic learning	4
	Total	**54items**

 Results
The data was analyzedon the basis of teaching methodology in religious education at university level. The data was analysis in the of term pretest/ posttest the scale is sums of

Likert-type items to obtain score range that is 1 to 5 and there were 20 items. There were 20 pairs for interpretation

Table 3:   *Mean and standard deviation of each pair of pre-testing and post-testing*

Pairs	Pre-Test Mean	SD	Post-Test Mean	SD
Pair 1	1.98	.706	4.06	1.24
Pair 2	2.46	.810	3.64	. 895
Pair 3	2.16	.885	4.01 .	892
Pair 4	1.74	1.04	3.50 .	742
Pair 5	2	.464	3.57	681
Pair 6	1.98	.706	4.04	.876
Pair 7	1.74	1.04	4.24	1.01
Pair 8	1.74	1.04	3.66	.920
Pair 9	1.74	1.04	3.56	.702
Pair 10	1.74	1.04	3.54	.810
Pair 11	1.85	.849	3.5	.702
Pair 12	1.74	1.04	3.94	1.62
Pair 13	2.16	.717	3.56	.702
Pair 14	2.44	1.00	3.56	.702
Pair 15	1.74	1.04	3.56	.702

Pair 16	1.74	1.04		3.48	.949
Pair 17	1.96	.256		3.56	.702
Pair 18	1.74	1.04		3.94	1.66
Pair 19	2.01	.450		4.04	1.27
Pair 20	3.90	1.66	3.62	.587	

In the table 1, there are significant differences between the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test and the post test of each pair. According to the results, if there are changes in the teaching methodology then understanding of religious education can be improved. Thus the probability is to get difference in pre-testing and post-testing score between the mean of each pair.

*Table 4: Mean different, correlation and t-test of each pair of pre-testing and post-testing.*

Pairs	Mean	S.D	S.Error mean	Lower	Upper	t	Correlation	Sig 2 tail
Pair 1 pre-test –post-test	-2.08	1.37	.158	-2.39	-1.76	-13.1	.093	.000
Pair 2 pre-test - post-test	-1.17	1.16	.134	-1.44	-.904	-8.70	.067	.000
Pair 3 pre-test - post-test	-1.85	1.35	.156	-2.16	-1.54	-11.8	-.156	.000
Pair 4 pre-test - post-test	-1.76	1.34	.155	-2.06	-1.45	-11.3	-.111	.000
Pair 5 pre-test - post-test	-1.57	.774	.089	-1.75	-1.39	-17.6	.128	.000
Pair 6 pre-test - post-test	-2.05	1.22	.141	-2.33	-1.77	-14.4	-.195	.000
Pair 7 pre-test - post-test	-2.49	1.30	.151	-2.79	-2.19	-16.4	.187	.000

Pair 8 pre-test - post-test	-1.92	1.39	.160	-2.24	-1.59	-11.9	-.005	.000
Pair 9 pre-test - post-test	-1.81	1.30	.150	-2.11	-1.51	-12.0	-.081	.000
Pair 10 pre-test - post-test	-1.80	1.31	.15	-2.10	-1.49	-11.8	.006	.000
Pair 11 pre-test - post-test	-1.70	1.124	.129	-1.96	-1.44	-13.1	-.042	.000
Pair 12 pre-test - post-test	-2.20	1.97	.22	-2.65	-1.74	-9.6	-.048	.000
Pair 13 pre-test - post-test	-1.40	.944	.109	-1.61	-1.18	-12.8	.115	.000
Pair 14 pre-test - post-test	-1.12	1.26	.145	-1.41	-.829	-7.68	-.067	.000
Pair 15 pre-test - post-test	-1.81	1.30	.150	-2.11	-1.51	-12.0	-.081	.000
Pair 16 pre-test - post-test	-1.73	1.28	.148	-2.02	-1.43	-11.6	.166	.000
Pair 17 pre-test - post-test	-1.60	.73	.084	-1.76	-1.43	-18.8	.051	.000
Pair 18 pre-test - post-test	-2.16	2.04	.236	-2.63	-1.68	-9.1	-.100	.000
Pair 19 pre-test - post-test	-2.02	1.26	.145	-2.31	-1.73	-13.9	.211	.000
Pair 20 pre-test - post-test	.280	1.75	.203	-.124	.684	1.3	.005	.000

In table 2, the statistical analysis of paired data is performed on the difference between the effective teaching methodologies which could create interest and understanding of Islamic values. There were 20 pairs to assess the need for improvement through the effective teaching methodology which brings change and better understanding among the students at university level. This study analyzed the impact of effective teaching methodology among religious studies at under-graduate level. Thus the probability is to get difference in pre-test and post-test scoring between the mean of each pair. According to table 2, each pair showed the improvement after the application of effective teaching methodology in religion studies.
Graph 1
Mean of pre-test and post-test of each pair in graphic representation
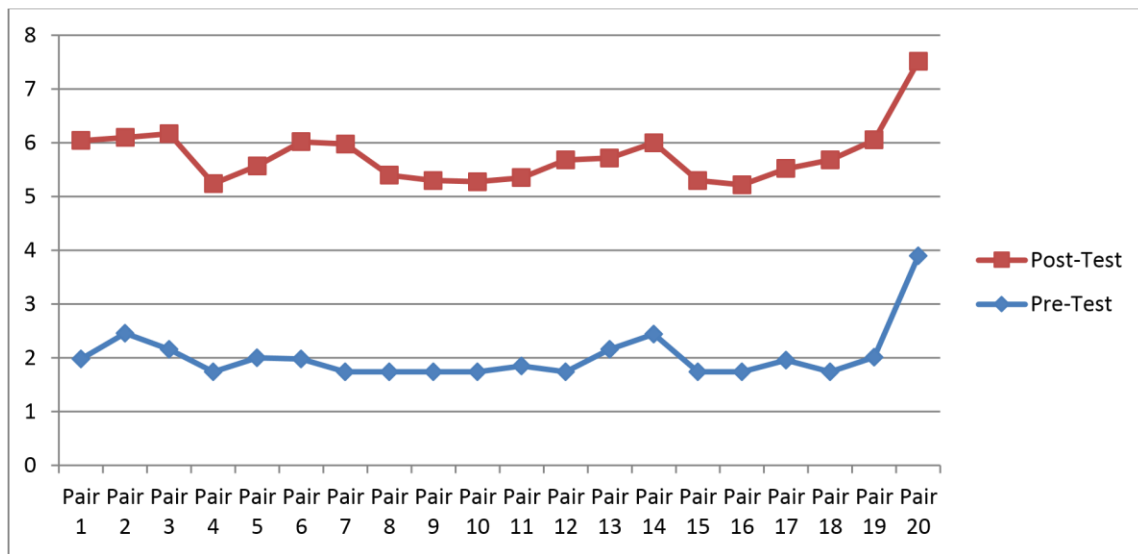
According to graphic representation of each pair improvement is shown in learning of religion studies after the changing in the methodology. This study analyzed the impact of effective teaching methodology among the religious studies at under-graduate level. Thus the probability is to get difference in pre-test and post-test score between the mean of each pair.

Internal Consistency:

In order to determine the internal consistency of pre-test and post-test of academic achievement in religious education, Cranach's alpha reliability analysis was done. Cranach's alpha reliability was computed which was 0.75. It revealed that this is a reliable tool for the assessment of academic achievement and productivity in religious education at university level.

Discussion:

The method of teaching and learning is considered as important pillar in educational process (Arifin, 2004) especially in modeling the character of students and learning environment in order to transfer knowledge, interest, attitude, beliefs and values. Religious education could certainly learn from perspective of pedagogy and awareness and should contribute towards student's spiritual, moral and social training (Feldor.M.2015). Religious experts and teachers adopt different methods and tactics to enhance the religious knowledge in minds of the students.

According to results shown in tables the representation of each pair improvement is shown in learning of religion studies after the changing in the methodology. Pre and post assessment of students in teaching religious education describes the impact of co-curricular activities as tool of learning in teaching methodology is more effective with the comparison of traditional teaching methodologies. This study analyzed the impact of effective teaching methodology among the religious studies at under-graduate level. Thus the probability is to

get difference in pre-test and post-test score between the mean of each pair**.** Results of table 2 in each pair showed the improvement after the application of effective teaching methodology in religion studies. In table 2, the statistical analysis of paired data is performed on the difference between the effective teaching methodologies which could create interest and understanding of Islamic values. There were 20 pairs to assess the need for improvement through the effective teaching methodology which brings change and better understanding among the students at university level. The effective teaching used in test is co-curricular activities which have created interest in students to understand and practice more clearly the teachings and values of Islam as religion and code of conduct.

Findings of Research
The findings of the research indicate the positive and influential impact of co-curricular activities on the learning process of the students. Sometimes religious studies and religious education has taken separately with the view that religious education has different set of aims from religious studies (Philip.B.2014). In European countries need of religious education or religious studies has been realized to reestablishes religious education in universities, colleges and schools and teachers education in spirit of multi faiths (Philip.B.2014). Courses were required in core curriculum for different grades, faculty designed reflective and contemplative exercises that would allow students to explore the spiritual resources of the world's great religious traditions and their relevance for practical life (White 2005).Results of this research are according to the need of teaching religious education which can allow students to explore the spiritual resources of the world's great religious traditions and their relevance for practical life (White 2005). In this regard the teachers must give practical and reflective education and learning to the students.
Tool of storytelling and class discussion used in this study similar to suggestions of Matthew, He has suggested that sometimes imaginative reflection is created through expression and communication, and sometimes relational reflection is created through spiritual accompaniment (Matthew W. G.2015).
Results of this study also fulfil the aim of teaching and learning Islam. Even the holy prophet Muhammad himself adopted diverse method of teaching when engaging with the Muslims, which includes, interactive conversation, practical demonstration, assigning tasks to the Companions with the intentions of team work, illustration, asking question , and through telling stories of the past.
 The aim of teaching Islamic studies up to undergrad level is ensuring the religious basis of the students .Focus of teaching Islamic studies to the students should be reflective education altogether in their mind as well practices especially as human beings and firm Muslims. Because the religious education as compulsory subject has taken by the students only to fulfill the compulsory requirement except for a few learners who opt for the said subjects to get guidance in applying religious education as standard code of life, hence, restraining the students from grasping the true and practical meaning of
Islam. Results of this study similar to the opinion of Peek that benefits of Religious education for Muslim students in the class room develop self-confidence and the ability to become productive members of society (Peek.L,2005).Teaching Islamic studies to the Muslims will promote a strong Islamic community, which will help in public service such as

establishing community hospitals, parks, homeless feeding events(Syed,2001).The same point has been supported by Barnes in 2014 that religious education should contribute to the ideas of morality which can contribute in pupils' moral development and to communities' social development. This will help students not only in learning Islamic education but will prepare them to make their lives, actions, decisions, and approaches according to the spiritual and ethical values of Islam (Pryor &.Rasekh,2004). Religious education and its ineffective method of teaching currently misrepresent the nature of religion because it lacks to develop respect for mankind (Barne, 2014).

No matter if it is religious education or religious studies need is to develop understanding of religion in minds of the people especially students of schools, colleges and universities.

Conclusion: Learning of any subject can be done through practical work not only at initial stage of school system but at university level as well. The traditional methods in Islamic education can help students in gathering large amount of information about Islam but it does not enable them to properly remember and using the information because the rational and analytical approach of teaching is missing in class room (Khan,2009). According to Hussain (2005) among the factors which disconnect students and teachers in Islamic education in weakened Islamic schools, the major is poor teaching methodologies. The common methodology used in Islamic education is direct instructions or lecture system (Ab.Halimet,2004). Lecture based teaching for Islamic Studies lacks creativity and learning of Islamic education.

Practical learning is encouraged in Islam even Prophet of Islam (SAW) has delivered revelation of Allah not only by recitation and the verses but by giving the practical implication of these verses through following the instructions of revelation, message of Islam was given to the learner of Islam with the practical demonstration of the teacher of Islam.

Another point that has been discovered through this survey is learning of theory through practice. Islamic studies subject at graduate level is taken as theoretical subject without any practical work. In this study the students have learned theories of Islamic beliefs, worships and moral code of conduct through activities which they have done. In other words Islam's claim as a practical religion has been proved because it can be taught practically; it can be followed practically as well. This research can be one of the tools to maximize the proper use of effective teaching methodologies that can help to present the clear vision of Islam and facilitate students in understanding the value of Islam. The goal of teaching religious education should be to have each student become a part of the learning experience. Students learning vary from wide spectrum from those who have difficulty in learning and those who are not interested in learning the subject of Islamic studies but they have to study as it is requirement of the degree and only be taught in one semester containing three credits in their whole four years program. The above results, findings and discussion of the present research by evaluating the impact of co-curricular activities in teaching of Islamic studies at under graduate level of students and effectiveness of adopting these techniques in creating interest of students in learning and applying Islamic teachings and values in practical life.

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